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Student Honored by IWU Chemistry Department

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. ÷ As her professors and fellow students have recognized, IWU alumnus Sara McGrath has certainly learned to love the tricks of her trade as a chemistry major at Illinois Wesleyan University.

McGrath, a recent IWU graduate from Hamilton, Ohio, was chosen by faculty members and other graduates of the chemistry department as the winner of this year's Mortimer Award.

This annual award is presented in memory of Franklin Spencer Mortimer, a professor of chemistry at IWU from 1921-1943. The Mortimer Award has been presented since 1969, and the name of each winner is engraved on a plaque displayed in the chemistry department.

According to Associate Professor of Chemistry Wendy Wolbach, the Mortimer Award, presented to the most active and enthusiastic senior chemistry major, is "the biggest honor in the chemistry department."

"Sara is a hard worker with a positive attitude, and she has always demonstrated exceptional service to both faculty and students," Wolbach said.

"It was a very nice surprise to receive this recognition from my teachers and classmates," said McGrath.

While at IWU, McGrath worked as a laboratory teaching assistant and tutored other chemistry students. As vice-president of the American Chemical Society chemistry club, she also planned and performed chemical demonstrations for children's organizations.

"I really enjoyed putting together the traveling shows for kids," McGrath said. "They love the tricks and the explosions, and I think it's important to show them that learning about science can be a lot of fun."

McGrath first discovered the fun in chemistry at IWU, where she found her professors' excitement for the discipline to be "catching."

"My professors always offered me personal attention," McGrath said. "When your teachers are your friends, education is easier and more enjoyable."

McGrath plans to continue her studies this fall at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she will enter the graduate program in analytical chemistry.

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